



# The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording during Groundworks for a New Dwelling



Report No. 53466/3/1

August 2017



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**Client:** Mr Andrew Wilson, The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, BH20 5EX

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3				

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## Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
<b>OASIS Reference</b>	terraina1-293124		
<b>Project Title</b>	New Dwelling, The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle		
<b>Short Description of Project</b>	Terrain Archaeology undertook a programme of archaeological observations and recording during groundworks associated with the construction of a new dwelling at The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, Purbeck, Dorset. No archaeological features or deposits of archaeological significance were identified during the works.		
<b>Project Dates</b>	Start: 03-07-2017	End: 08-08-2017	
<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No/No		
<b>Project Code</b>	53466		
<b>Monument Type and Period</b>	None		
<b>Significant Finds</b>	None		
Project Location			
<b>County/District/Parish</b>	Dorset/ Purbeck/ Corfe Castle		
<b>Site Address</b>	The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, Purbeck, Dorset, BH20 5EX		
<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SY 9626 8113		
<b>Site Area</b>	c. 655 m <sup>2</sup>		
<b>Height OD</b>			
Project Creators			
<b>Organisation</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	None		
<b>Project Design Originator</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Supervisor</b>	Mike Trevarthen		
<b>Project Manager</b>	Peter Bellamy		
<b>Sponsor or Funding Body</b>	Mr Andrew Wilson		
Project Archive			
<b>Archive Type</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
<b>Location/Accession No</b>	No physical archive	No digital archive	No paper archive
<b>Contents</b>			

# The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording of New Extension, March 2017

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Andrew Wilson to carry out a programme of archaeological observations and recording (a 'watching brief') at The Eye, Higher Filbank, Corfe Castle, Dorset. Purbeck District Council, the Local Planning Authority, granted approval of the planning application for the present property to be partitioned and for a new dwelling and associated access to be erected in the existing garden (Application number 6/2017/0003). Condition 3 of the planning approval states: *"No building work on implementing this planning permission shall start until the applicant makes arrangement for archaeological observations and recording to take place while the proposed extensions are being formed and the ground works in the garden of The Eye are taking place. Details of these arrangements must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council at least one month before any engineering work commences at the development site. All approved building work shall be carried out in strict accordance with the agreed details. Reason: To ensure the appropriate identification, recording and publication of archaeological and historic remains which may be present on site. Starting the works before arrangements are in place for archaeological observations and recording to occur may result in the loss of or damage to archaeological and historic remains which may be present."*

Archaeological monitoring of the groundworks was carried out by Mike Trevarthen BA (Hons) ACIfA on the 3rd July 2017 (water percolation test pit and new service trench) and on the 8th August 2017 (main works).

The cooperation and assistance of Andrew Wilson, Wayne Turner and staff from Turner & Sons, Wareham, is gratefully acknowledged.

#### 1.2 Project Brief and Specification

No written brief for the archaeological works was issued by, or on behalf of, the Local Planning Authority. The works were carried out in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2017).

#### 1.3 Site Location

The site, centred on Ordnance Survey NGR SY 9626 8113, is located on Higher Filbank, Town's End, at the southern end of Corfe Castle village, on the northern edge of Corfe Common. The Eye is a detached house set in a spacious plot in a residential area. Within the site ground levels fall to the south east, from about 47.5 m aOD to about 41.7 m aOD.

#### 1.4 Geology

The solid geology is mapped as mudstones of the Cretaceous Wealden Group, with no superficial deposits recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

#### 1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The prehistoric and Roman archaeology of the site and its environs poorly understood. Evidence for Mesolithic flint scatters has been found in the town (Norcott 2004), and at Bucknowle Farm, c. 1 km to the WNW, where a possible Middle Neolithic enclosure, sherds of Fengate Ware, and Late Neolithic finds were also excavated (Light & Ellis 2009). There have been a number of other prehistoric findspots in the vicinity, and the remains of a dispersed Bronze Age barrow cemetery lie ranged along Corfe Common just south of the site (RCHME 1970, 443).

Purbeck has revealed considerable evidence for Roman exploitation of Kimmeridge shale and other stone. Excavation of a Roman villa with Iron Age antecedents at Bucknowle farm, revealed evidence for both domestic and industrial activities (Light & Ellis 2009), and another large settlement and industrial site is known at Norden, just north of Corfe Castle (Sunter 1987). More Roman occupation evidence has been found on Castle Hill and West Hill (RCHME 1970, 598-9). Late Iron Age and/or Romano-British features and pottery have been found close to the site (Farrar 1965; Valentin 1993; Trevarthen in prep.), but the precise nature and extent of the activity in this area is not yet known.

The town of Corfe Castle developed to the south of the castle, which was founded in 1080, though there may have been some earlier Saxon buildings on the site (Penn 1980, 33-5). The castle was rebuilt in stone and enlarged in the 12th and 13th centuries and the town may have developed during this time (Davey 2011). The economic success of the medieval town was in a large part a result of the Purbeck Marble industry.

The site lies well beyond the limits of the medieval and post-medieval town, and a low, linear earthwork bank crossing the site on an approximately east-west alignment (Dorset Historic Environment Record MDO 31531) is recorded as a medieval or post-medieval field boundary. The presence of medieval pottery from Town's End may also suggest there was some occupation or other activity in this area.

The creation of a turnpike road between Wareham and Swanage in 1766 brought East Street to prominence, and promoted settlement along it. The settlement at Town's End may have originated as an eighteenth century squatter settlement (Davey 2011), but the area was not significantly developed until the 1950s.

The Eye was built on two adjoining land plots at Higher Filbank, having been designed for the reclusive musician and composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji by architects Bernard Malcolm Goodwin and John Lawrence (Owen 2006, 55), and built by Swanage builder Harry Parsons. Sorabji moved into the house in late 1956 (Owen 2006, 55, 76). The current owner, Mr Andrew Wilson, reports that by the time of its sale to him, the garden of The Eye was greatly overgrown, particularly at its western end nearest Corfe Common, and was extensively planted with *leylandii*, requiring much clearance to form the present garden. He also notes that some dumping of soils took place on the downslope side of the medieval/post-medieval lynchet bank, softening its overall profile (Owen 2006, 69, 75; pers. comm.).

## 1.6 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

No previous archaeological fieldwork has been undertaken within, or immediately adjacent to the property, but some small-scale investigations have been carried out in the vicinity of the site.

A quantity of Romano-British pottery was recovered during the excavation of footings for housing at Town's End (SY 9650 8227), and medieval sherds were found at another house (SY 9628 8117) (Farrar 1965). A Roman ditch and a post-medieval soil were recorded in a watching brief during construction of a new house at 6 Halves Cottages in 1993 (Valentin 1993). A small excavation at Greyflete, some 50-60 m northeast of the site, revealed Iron Age and/or Romano-British features and pottery (Trevarthen in prep), augmenting an already extensive collection of contemporary finds from Greyflete (Mr Nick King, pers. comm.).

## 1.7 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Its objectives were:

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.



## 1.8 Groundworks

A soil percolation test pit and a new cable trench to divert the existing telephone cable were excavated in July 2017, prior to the main phase of groundworks in August 2017. The soil percolation test pit measured about 1.6 m by 0.9 m and over 1.5 m deep and was excavated by machine near the western edge of the site (Figure 2). The new telephone cable trench, which measured 0.5 m wide and up to 0.5 m deep, was dug by machine from the existing house along the northern boundary of the property.

The initial phase of the main groundworks consisted of topsoil stripping of the area of the new dwelling and the access road down onto the top of the underlying natural weathered clay using a 13-tonne tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8 m wide toothless ditching bucket. The stripped area measured approximately 655 m<sup>2</sup> in total, (Figure 2). The topsoil from the main clearance works was double-handled to a temporary on-site store pending removal from site.

As no *in situ* archaeology was exposed during these initial works, the remaining groundworks were not observed.

## 1.9 Methods

The methodology, scope, aims and objectives of the works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Terrain Archaeology in April 2017 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3466/0/1).

The observation and recording of the groundworks was undertaken to the standards of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), with an archaeologist in attendance during water percolation testing, the excavation of a telephone cable trench, and during soil stripping for the new dwelling and access road.

Deposits exposed by the works were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's suite of pro-formae written and graphic record sheets. A photographic record of the work was maintained in digital format, and included aspects of its setting, conduct and technical detail.

## 1.10 Archive and Dissemination

### 1.10.1 Paper Archive

No paper archive will be retained beyond the end of the project.

### 1.10.2 Artefacts

No artefacts or other materials were retained from the site. By agreement, the small group of finds recovered from the site will be returned to the property owner.

### 1.10.3 Report

A copy of this report will be lodged with Dorset County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project ([www.oasis.ac.uk](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)) under the reference code *terrains1-293124*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Soil Sequence

All stripped areas produced a similar soil sequence, with only minor variations in the thickness of topsoil cover.

0.00 – 0.30 m BGL **Topsoil**

Turf over firm mid grey-brown clay loam, occasional small heathstone clasts. Frequent roots, particularly to the north part of the site where a row of *Leylandii* has recently been removed

0.30 m + BGL      **Natural deposits**      Very firm, weathered, light yellow- and orange-brown loamy clay with numerous irregular mottles and variations, sometimes with areas of fragmented heathstone

## 2.2 Archaeological Features and Deposits

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were noted.

## 3. Finds

### 3.1 Finds Assemblage

A small, chronologically disparate assemblage of finds was recovered during stripping of the new dwelling footprint and new access route. Sixteen objects (101.1g) were recovered, all from topsoil. These are quantified and discussed in greater detail below.

Context	Pottery	Flint	Clay Tobacco Pipe
Topsoil	6/60.3g	4/26.7g	6/14.1g
<i>Total</i>	<i>6/60.3g</i>	<i>4/26.7g</i>	<i>6/14.1g</i>

*Table 1: Quantification of finds by context (count/weight in grams)*

### 3.2 Pottery

Two small abraded fragments of Late Iron Age or early Romano-British pottery (44.2g) consisting of an undiagnostic body sherd and a larger fragment of jar base, the latter some 17mm thick. Both possessed the reduced fabric and abundant quartz sand temper typical of the contemporary local Wareham/Poole Harbour ceramic industries.

Post-medieval pottery comprised one sherd of decorated tin-glazed plate with pale yellow soft paste fabric under a white glaze ground with simple blue decorative motifs, two small sherds of olive-green glazed earthenware and a single piece of industrially produced blue-and-white transfer printed whiteware. Of these, the tin-glazed ware could be late 16th–17th century. The remainder are likely to be 18th–19th century.

### 3.3 Flint

Four pieces of artificially flaked flint (26.7g) included an irregular blade, potentially of Neolithic date, with a triangular cross-section and an area of semi-invasive retouch along part of one dorsal margin. This was made on mottled grey flint and was only very lightly patinated. No evidence for core-edge abrasion was noted. The remainder of the group is broadly indicative of prehistoric activity but not closely datable, comprising two small flakes (one slightly burnt) and a broken flake (also burnt).

### 3.4 Clay Tobacco-Pipe

Six pieces of dark-stained clay tobacco pipe were recovered. These consisted of one plain stem fragment, and five fragments from a single late 17th century bowl with a plain circular heel.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

### 4.1 Discussion

No previously unknown features of archaeological significance were identified during the groundworks. Given the relatively large area investigated at The Eye, this strongly suggests that the Late Iron Age/Romano British activity noted to the NNW, around 6 Halves Cottages (Valentin 1993) and Greyflete (Trevarthen in prep.) does not extend as far as The Eye, but probably terminates somewhere beneath the intervening property (Half Acre).

The medieval or post-medieval field bank was not significantly impacted by the present works.

## 4.2 Conclusions

The archaeological potential of the site was unknown prior to commencement of groundwork. The programme of observations and recording of the groundworks has confirmed that no heritage assets were adversely impacted by the works, and that the archaeological programme has been successful, both in offsetting any loss in the overall archaeological significance of the site itself, and in enhancing understanding of other known heritage assets at Higher Filbank.

## 5. References

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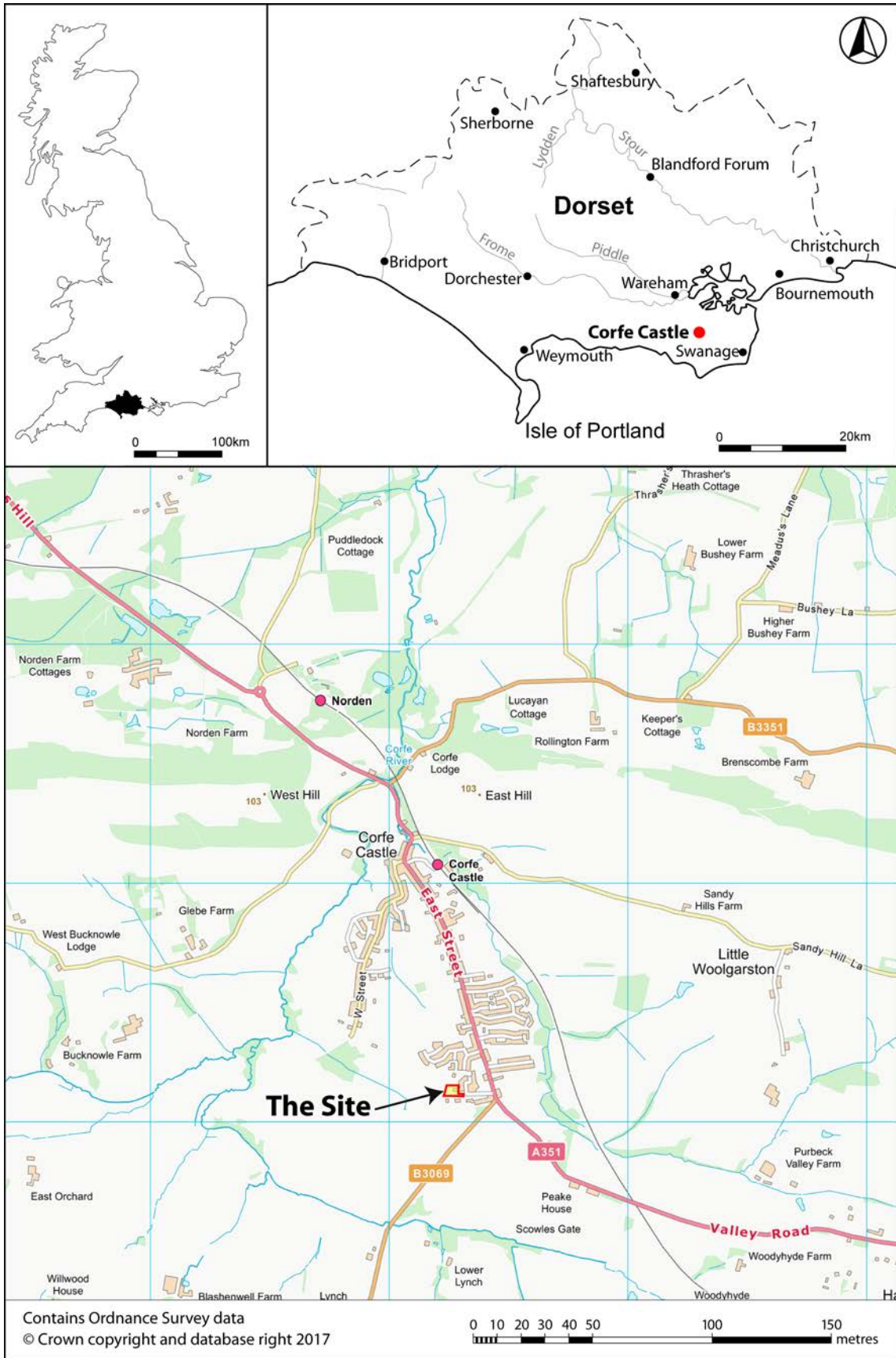


Figure 1: Site Location.

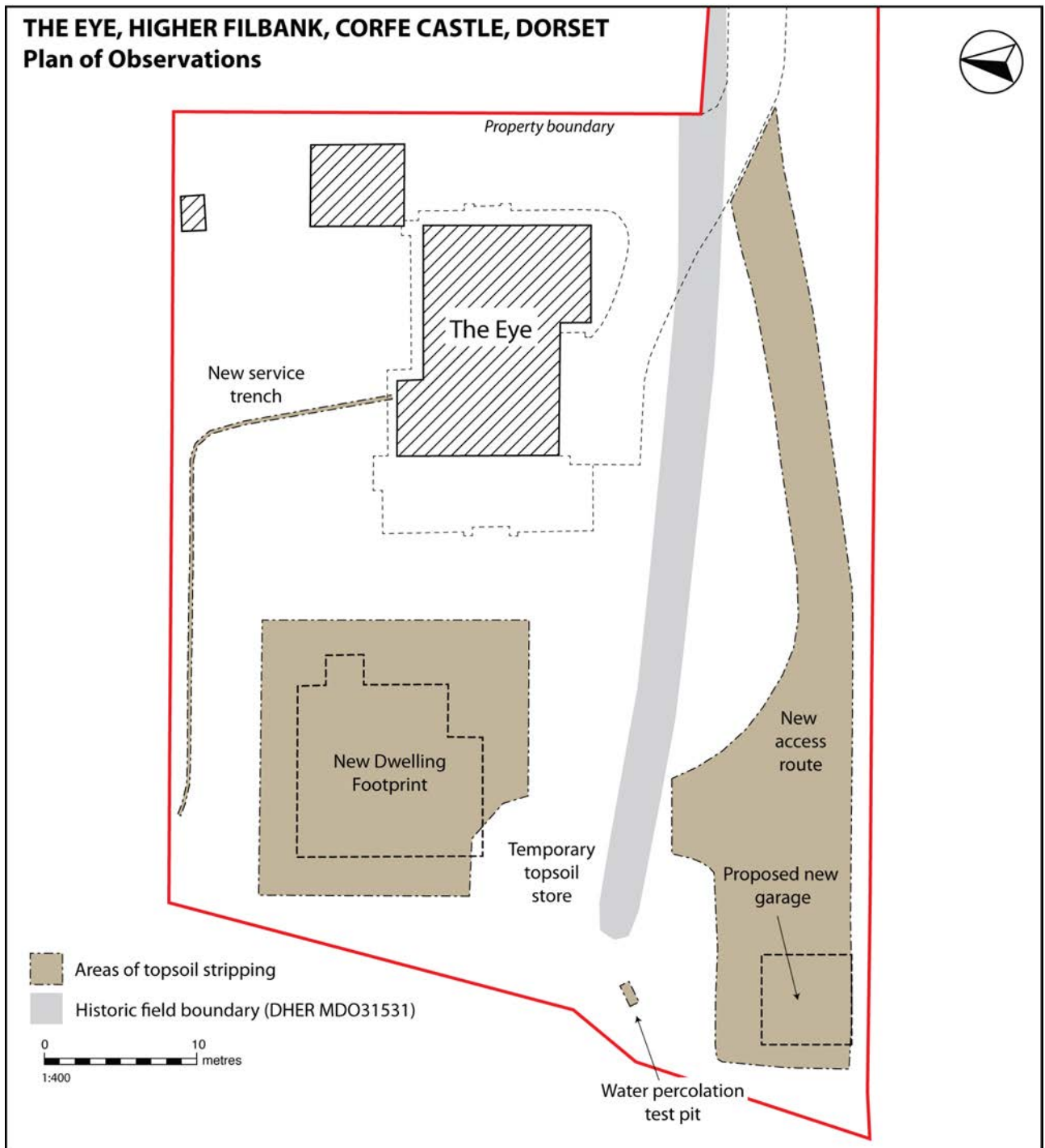


Figure 2: Plan of Observations





*Plate 1: New service trench under excavation. View from west.*



*Plate 2: Initial topsoil stripping of the new house footprint area. View from east.*



*Plate 3: New house footprint area fully topsoil stripped. View from south.*





*Plate 4: New access route. View from west*